

Two Scholars Have A Warning For America About White Christian Nationalism - Americans United

4-5 minutes

Last week on this blog, [we explored](#) the longstanding connections between white Christian nationalism (WCN) and the “great replacement,” a racist conspiracy theory that holds that a sinister cabal of “elites” composed of Jews and Democrats is working to replace white voters with Black and brown people who will back their political agenda.

Yesterday, scholars Samuel L. Perry and Philip S. Gorski, authors of the new book [The Flag and the Cross: White Christian Nationalism And The Threat To American Democracy](#), added some valuable thoughts to this discussion in a *Washington Post* [op-ed headlined](#), “With the Buffalo massacre, white Christian nationalism strikes again.”

Post columns are often behind a paywall, and you might not be able to read the whole piece unless you’re a subscriber, so here are a few important takeaways from the article:

White Christian nationalism is designed to perpetuate a minority view: Perry and Gorski write, “The ideology’s adherents are committed to instituting an ethno-culture that represents a shrinking minority – a traditionalist Christian social order in which the freedoms of White Christians are privileged. Theirs is a world where race, religion and national belonging have become virtually inseparable and are not necessarily tied to spirituality. And the spread of this kind of thinking is rapid and startling.”

White Christian nationalists have bought into a “big lie” about American history: In the WCN worldview, America was never intended to be a secular state that operates under separation of church and state. Rather, it was founded of and by conservative Christians. WCN, they write, “is anchored in a mythological version of American history that goes something like this: America was founded as a Christian nation; the founders were traditional Christians; the founding documents are biblically based; God has therefore bestowed immense wealth and power on America and given it a mission to spread freedom and religion around the world; but that mission and those blessings are now threatened by the presence of non-Whites, non-Christians and non-native-born

people on American soil. Today this story is propagated by a veritable Christian-nationalist industry that includes radio stations, video series, scores of books and entire organizations dedicated to telling White conservative Christians that the nation is their birthright.”

You don’t have to be a conservative Christian to embrace white Christian nationalism: The “Christian” part of white Christian nationalism is ultra-conservative and fundamentalist. But not all adherents of WCN, Perry and Gorski note, hold these views themselves. (And many theologically conservative Christians reject WCN.) Instead, they tend to see fundamentalist Christianity as a device for controlling American society. The two note that according to a recent survey, “about 20 percent of Americans who believe that the federal government should declare the nation Christian don’t even identify as Christian – a view that aligns with the Buffalo suspect’s view of Christianity. Answering his own question about whether he thought of himself as Christian, he wrote in his online post: ‘No. I do not ask God for salvation by faith, nor do I confess my sins to him.’ He added that ‘I do however believe in and practice many Christian values.’”

Adherents of white Christian nationalism are increasingly open to embracing violence: In perhaps their most disturbing finding, Perry and Gorski write, “The more that White Americans agree that the federal government should declare the United States a Christian nation, the more they affirm that ‘true American patriots’ may have to resort to physical violence to save the country.”

We saw the results of the poisonous belief that is WCN on Jan. 6, 2021, and we saw it more recently in Buffalo. Unfortunately, we’ll continue to see it until more Americans wake up to the threat menacing our republic – and take action to stop it.

P.S. Author Katherine Stewart, who [knows a thing or two](#) about Christian nationalism herself, is reviewing *The Flag and the Cross* in the June issue of *Church & State*. If you want to receive the magazine, [join Americans United today](#).